

Cosponsors Legislation to Combat Foreclosures Among Vets

Washington, DC- Today at a hearing on homeless veterans in the House Veteran's Affairs Committee Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) questioned Pete Dougherty of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other witnesses on the preparedness for receiving homeless veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Rodriguez also signed on as a cosponsor to two bills that would combat foreclosures among veterans and their families.

"The VA and a number of organizations have done a remarkable job of caring for our homeless veterans," said Rodriguez. "But as more veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan with debilitating physical and psychological injuries, I am concerned that the VA is ill-prepared to handle a sudden influx. After the war in Vietnam, we didn't know for some time that veteran homelessness was a large problem. Homeless veterans should not have to face an ill-prepared VA again."

Rodriguez this week also cosponsored two bills that would help protect veterans and their families from homelessness by allowing for home ownership. H.R. 4883 would prohibit foreclosure of property owned by a service member for one year following a period of military service. H.R. 4884, the *Helping Our Veterans to Keep Their Homes Act of 2008*, would take a number of steps to help veterans ensure they can continue to pay their mortgages.

Additionally, Rodriguez asked witnesses at the hearing about housing for homeless veterans that are women, and homeless veterans with children.

Rodriguez recently discussed homeless veterans with VA Secretary Peake when Peake visited a San Antonio homeless veterans facility at the end of March. In Texas alone there are approximately 16,000 homeless veterans and the VA only has capacity for 233 beds.

"Right now there are approximately 1,500 homeless veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and the number is likely to grow," added Rodriguez. "We must ensure that when our men and women enlist to serve, they know that we will keep our promise to them once they return."

Prior to becoming homeless, a large number of veterans at risk have struggled with Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or have addictions acquired during or worsened by their military service. These conditions can interrupt their ability to keep a job, establish savings, and in some cases, maintain a family and household.

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Congressman Rodriguez is a former social worker who currently serves on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and House Committee on Appropriations. For more information on Congressman Rodriguez visit <http://rodriguez.mail.house.gov/>